

COUNT RODERIC'S
CASTLE:

OR,
GOTHIC TIMES,

A TALE.
IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

In winter's tedious nights, sit by the fire,
With good old folks, and let them tell thee tales
Of woeful ages long ago betide.

SHAK. RICH. II.

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COUNT RODERIC'S CASTLE.

CHAP. I.

IN those days when Astolpho, sur-
named the Proud, beheld his regal
sway extend over the rich and fertile
plains of Lombardy, the name of Ro-
deric the Hardy was not unknown to

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B

fame.

same. He had fought the battles of the empire; and an almost uninterrupted series of success had crowned his arms. He had acquired immortal honour to himself, and a vast accession of territory to his master; but wholly untrained in the field of war, and little skilled in the cabals of a court, he found, after a life almost exhausted in the painful pursuits of glory, the smiles of the king's countenance withdrawn.

He no sooner witnessed the dangerous gloom which began to thicken around him, than he prepared to pursue those steps which were most likely

to



to conduce to his safety, and lead him to an asylum in which he might, in all probability, find a shelter from the gathering storm. He retired, then, while it was yet safe to retire, from the capital, and sought a castle of his own near the frontiers of a lately conquered province—a retreat, in which the bolts of Astolpho's wrath were but little likely to reach him. To this retirement he summoned an only son, whom he had left behind him in the army, and who, though but a young soldier, had already acquired a portion of fame little inferior to that of his father.

This son, who was called Rhinaldo, had been, during the intervals which occurred between each campaign, much resident at court, and in the palace of Astolpho first beheld the lady Isabel, the daughter of the late king, and loved her. It would have been difficult indeed for a young man of the coldest heart to behold her without emotion. In her dark eyes were mingled all the fire of genius with all the softness of sensibility; on her animated countenance fate blended majesty and mildness; on her brow was pictured commanding beauty; in her smile the most winning sweetness; her shape was faultless,

faultless, and her demeanour artless and graceful; nor was Isabel blind to the merits of the young soldier—a person the very standard of manly beauty—a countenance, where every virtue of his heart was pourtrayed—a cultivated mind—a high and unspotted reputation, did not escape the observation of the lady Isabel. They had frequent opportunities of conversing, and of those opportunities a mutual passion was the result.

The resentment of Astolpho became implacable, when he heard of Count Roderic's retreat; and the very day

B. 3

after

after Rhinaldo had, in obedience to his father's mandates, quitted the army to join him in his retirement, orders arrived at the camp to supersede him in his command, and cause him to be conveyed close prisoner to the capital.

These orders had, indeed, been preceded by a letter from the lady Isabel, warning Rhinaldo of the danger which threatened him;—a letter, rendered not more dear to Rhinaldo by the noble proof it contained, than by the tender vows it breathed, of inviolable fidelity.

In

In the retirement which his father had chosen, Rhinaldo passed many melancholy hours in meditating on his beloved but absent Isabel. In vain did Count Roderic endeavour to divert his thoughts from the ceaseless object of their attention, by dissertations on that science in which this beloved son had, from the earliest period of life, been his pupil, and in which they had both gained so great a degree of renown. In vain did he encourage, among his men at arms, (for he carried into retirement with him a retinue, which caused no little jealousy at court,) those martial exercises for their courage and dexterity in which

the men of that age were renowned. In vain did the court of the Castle echo daily with the sound of the trumpet.— In vain were the banners seen waving above the battlements. That heart which had so often leaped at the sound of martial music, which owned no charms but those which blazed in the front of an embattled host, now shrunk from what it deemed a tedious mockery, and sought to indulge its feelings amid the luxury of the most gloomy solitude.

A deep and devious forest, which flanked the Castle to the south, afforded this solitude, and thither did

Rhinaldo

Rhinaldo daily repair to feast his imagination on the thousand charms with which the image of his Isabel was replete. His father, who discovered his dislike of society, and probably in some measure guessed at the cause of it, forbore, at length, to restrain his inclination. They seldom met but at table, (from the tasteless festivity of which Rhinaldo retired as soon as decency would permit him,) or at those hours when the public duties of religion summoned them to the neighbouring convent.

At

At these duties Rhinaldo was so constant, and his attention to them was so rigid and undeviating, that his father could not forbear entertaining some fears, that his melancholy would at length enroll him among the religious of the place. Nor were those fears entertained upon light or frivolous grounds. The society consisted of thirty persons, who had all borne arms with a considerable degree of reputation. The superior was an old knight, who had led Roderic himself in the field, and had been his guide in the path of glory, though he was yet, from
a youth,

a youth, inured to toil, and an age fostered by temperance, vigorous and hardy. But the person, the charms of whose society so frequently led the steps of Rhinaldo towards the Convent, was an hermit, who had built his cell hard by, and whose disposition, truly charitable, had rendered him highly respected, as well by the monks themselves, as by the scattered inhabitants of the neighbourhood.

The convent of St. Julian was situated close to Count Roderic's Castle, on a bold and commanding eminence.— Consisting chiefly of rock, it seemed scarcely

scarcely capable of affording nourishment to the numerous shrubs, whose twisted roots seemed incorporated with it, and was accessible only by a winding path of considerable length. Steep, rugged, and intricate, it was a task of considerable labour to gain the summit, whose picturesque appearance, from the vale below, never failed to incite in the mind an ardent wish to attain it.

The flinty walls of the Convent seemed to have their foundation in air, and its gothic spires hung over the brow of the rock with an awful magnificence. It overlooked the Castle:

This,

This, as the latter was a place of strength, was a circumstance of importance, and extreme care was taken, on any prospect of an attack, to secure this post, and to afford it ample supplies.

Beneath a projecting part of the cliff, close to the winding path already mentioned, and at no great distance from the summit, had the hermit, of whose society young Rhinaldo was so fond, fixed his abode. His daily care, during the period of his residence in that spot, when the duties of religion had been fulfilled, was to enlarge, amend,

amend, and decorate his humble cell, till he had at length formed an habitation, which, for simple beauty and comfort, the thoughtless inhabitant of the gay world might envy him.

To this retreat, then, did Rhinaldo fly from the cumberous magnificence of Count Roderic's establishment.— Here could he meditate at leisure on the virtues and accomplishments of his beloved Isabel. Here too (and it was that circumstance which rendered the spot so dear to him) could he confide, without the dread of cold sarcasm, or harsh reproof, the tender secret of his heart.

heart. Father Anthony (for that was the hermit's name) was austere indeed towards himself, but, like the holy master, to whose service he had now devoted himself, he wept over the failings of others.

CHAP.

CHAP. II.

SOME months had now passed since Rhinaldo quitted his command to retire to the Castle of his father, and his visits to the hermitage had grown daily more and more frequent, when
one

one morning, at the approach of dawn, he ordered the draw-bridge to be let down, and, attended only by one faithful servant, took the road which led to the capital. They passed the day in tracing the thick and impervious forest which cloaths for many miles the southern frontier of that kingdom, and the shades of evening overtook them as they gained it's verge. The night set in with unwonted darkness, and the chill gust, which began to howl from the north, foretold an approaching tempest. A few drops of thick rain fell—the darkness redoubled—the distant thunder began to growl——Rhinaldo

gave his horse the reins, and trusting to the sagacity of this long-trying favourite for his safety, he proceeded at a slow pace, attended by his faithful servant, catching every now and then a glimpse of the wild scene around, by the gleam of the lightning, which began to dart with almost unabating rapidity.

Rugiero (so was Rhinaldo's servant called) stopped his horse suddenly, and called to his master; "surely, my lord," said he, "by the flash of the lightning, I just now descried the walls of a mansion."

Rhinaldo

Rhinaldo stopped. Rugiero bade him look to the right, and between some tall trees he thought he perceived some rising turrets. They turned their horses, and made slowly and cautiously for the spot. As they drew near, they found that their surmises were true.— They pursued their route, and at length, with considerable difficulty, arrived at the gate of an old mansion.

Like most of the seats of the nobility in that kingdom, it was surrounded by a moat. Rugiero alighted from his horse, and slowly began to trace the moat round, to discover, if possible, a

bridge over which they might pass, and at least gain some shelter from the inclemency of the night. He had not proceeded far, before he perceived, on the opposite side, a draw-bridge drawn up, which made him conjecture, that, desolate as the building appeared, (for the walls were in several parts overgrown with thick ivy, and bore every mark, as far as the light would permit them to be discovered, of great antiquity) it was inhabited.

He began now to halloo as loud as he could, but with little probability, from the howling of the storm, of
making

making himself heard. He continued his progress along the margin of the moat, and Rhinaldo, having alighted from his horse, slowly followed him.— They had not proceeded far, before they discovered that this outwork bore as strong marks of decay as the rest of the building, and that the raising the draw-bridge at night must be more a work of custom than utility.

Rugiero, by a very easy, but broken descent, gained the moat, and boldly stepped into it. He found it very shallow, and ascending upon the ruins which had fallen from a low and crumb-

ling wall on the other side, he gained the opposite bank. He then returned to give his master notice of this circumstance, and to conduct him over. Rhinaldo did not hesitate; taking his horse in his hand, he followed his servant. The beasts sprang lightly from the ruins upon the crazy remains of this mouldering bulwark, and the travellers, passing slowly round the walls of the house, arrived at a large and lofty porch, over-hung with ivy, and mid-leg deep in the grass, which grew thro' the crevices of the stones with which it had been paved. Having fastened their horses to a thorn which grew close

to

to one of the pillars, they retired to the extremity of the porch for shelter. This shelter, however, they did not find—the rain beat in upon them with violence.

Rhinaldo resolved to try if the door was open. It was not improbable that it should be so, even if the mansion were inhabited. In a place so desolate, there is little fear of interlopers, and the moat and draw-bridge would probably render the domestics careless.—He raised a weighty latch, and putting his shoulder against the door, it opened

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heavily ;

heavily; and Rhinaldo and his servant entered. Rhinaldo still held the door in his hand, and firmly persuaded, from every thing he had hitherto witnessed, that the house was uninhabited, ordered Rugiero to conduct the horses into the hall, where he determined to rest for the night.

Rugiero strenuously advised him to learn first, whether the mansion were actually inhabited or no; and with this advice, upon consideration, he thought it best to comply. He hallooed aloud, but the storm seemed to mock his efforts.

forts. He walked slowly across the hall, but stopping suddenly, exclaimed, "Rugiero, are these your footsteps which I hear?" "No, my Lord," answered Rugiero, "I have not moved from this spot." "There is somebody," continued Rhinaldo, "ascending a flight of stairs."

He now hallooed again; when a hoarse voice, in a low tone, exclaimed, "peace, fool! are you fit to be trusted with a secret of such importance?" Still all was dark; the sound of the footsteps on the staircase died gradually away, and left Rhinaldo much perplexed.

plexed. "Stay here," said he, after a pause, to Rugiero, "till I return."

Rugiero remonstrated, but his master was peremptory, and this attendant had studied discipline in a camp. "I will be cautious," said Rhinaldo, mildly, in order to soften the apprehensions of his faithful servant. "At all events, your remaining here will secure us a retreat, should any thing sinister occur."

Rhinaldo now advanced, and tracing his way slowly and cautiously along the hall, reached at length the staircase,

case, from which the words, which so much awakened his curiosity, had proceeded. He judged that this staircase, though now somewhat crazy from age, had once been magnificent. It was very spacious. He had scarcely got half way up it, when he heard footsteps above him, as if of some person descending. He stood motionless, in hopes that, whoever it might be, from the size of the staircase they would pass without detecting him; for the mystery of persons thus moving in the dark perplexed him even more than the singular speech he had heard, and he was more than ever anxious to discover
the

the cause of it. The footsteps now seemed advancing towards him; he moved a pace to the right, in order to avoid a meeting, and placed himself just in the way of the person descending, who jostled him. A voice immediately exclaimed, "Gaspard, why do you not speak? You must either bawl or be dumb—the house is locked in sleep—you may now strike a light—meet me, ten minutes hence, in the refectory."

Rhinaldo was now divided what to do—when a light, the only one he had yet discovered, gleaming dimly from
the

the door of a chamber into a long gallery above, determined him to pursue his way up the staircase. He proceeded lightly and cautiously. The light in a short time disappeared, but he bent his steps towards the place whence it had proceeded. He could discover this place to be a spacious chamber, for through a door which opened into a passage at the farther end of it, he again saw a faint ray of light. He crossed the chamber, and entered the passage, at the farther end of which he just distinguished the legs of a man ascending a narrow staircase. He fol-

lowed with extreme caution, and saw this person enter a small room at the top of the staircase, which seemed to be a repository for very old battered and unserviceable armour, and worn-out horse-furniture. The person he had followed passed straight to the end of the room, and Rhinaldo gained such a height on the staircase, as to see him shove back a pannel of the wainscot, which seemed artificially contrived for the purpose of concealment, and pulling a bunch of keys from his pocket, open a strong massy door, plated with iron; he then descended a few steps, shutting

shutting it after him, and Rhinaldo lost sight of him.

Perplexed at this circumstance, he advanced some paces towards the iron door. He listened, and thought he could hear the sound of voices; but it was so indistinct, that he was left at last in doubt whether he had not been deceived; and recollecting the conversation which passed on the staircase, he resolved to return and rejoin Rugiero, with whom perhaps he might discover what was to be perpetrated in the refectory. He groped his way down again, and at his post he found his servant,

yant, who, the moment he came near him, grasped his hand, and bade him, in a low whisper, be silent and watch.

They had not stood many minutes before they perceived a faint light gleam from an arch way on the opposite side of the hall, and two figures advancing slowly along a passage, one of whom carried a kind of dark lantern. They perceived them to be men meanly dressed, and of the most unprepossessing appearance; one particularly, whose profusion of coarse, long, black hair, was unpleasingly contrasted with the livid paleness of his countenance,

countenance, excited Rhinaldo's attention.

In a hoarse and dissonant voice, but which Rhinaldo discovered to be the same which had addressed him on the staircase, he exclaimed, "Hark! I heard something." " 'Twas nothing but the wind," replied the other.—

"Hift!" exclaimed the first, and paused; "where are the servants?"

"Locked in sleep," said the other.—

They now placed their light on a table just within the arch way, and the man who had spoke first, said to the other, "why did not you answer me, when I

met you on the staircase?" "When?" said the other. "Just now—within these ten minutes." "I never met you—I have not been up stairs."—"Liar!" exclaimed the first. "May I fall dead this instant," returned the second, "if I have left the refectory. Hey! what ails you? you tremble." "No matter," exclaimed the first, in a faltering voice. "Give me the bottle." He took a small wicker bottle from the other; and drank from it. It seemed to revive him. "Give me the lanthorn," said he, "and the dagger." He received from him the dark lanthorn, and a dagger of some length, which

which he stuck in his girdle. " Shall you want me ?" asked the second man.

" No," said the first ; " go—wait for my lord—we shall not want you, 'till the body is to be disposed of."——

" Mercy on us !" cried the second, in an awful but tremulous tone. The first turned short round upon him, muttered something between his teeth, and walked slowly across the hall towards another passage, while the second man moved towards the staircase, which he ascended.

Rhinaldo and Rugiero, with as little noise as possible, followed the first

man; yet they could not proceed so silently, but that they caused him to turn round several times. The loudness of the storm, however, deceived him, and he continued to move forward, through a winding passage, 'till he stopped suddenly at a low arched door, which he opened with a key.

Rhinaldo drew his sword, and rushed forward to prevent his shutting it again. This, however, he did not attempt, and Rhinaldo gained the door, just as he had placed the lanthorn on the floor, in the middle of a small vaulted room, and seemed occupied in thought.

thought. He stood with his arms folded, and his face turned towards Rhinaldo. Never was a countenance so ghastly and horrid. It betrayed a most diabolical agitation of mind. After standing thus for a few seconds, he stooped down, and, feeling along the floor, laid hold of an iron ring, by which, after a few efforts, he pulled up a trap door, and discovered, by the gleam of the lanthorn, a broken flight of steps. He now took up the lanthorn in one hand, and holding the door with the other, began to descend. Rhinaldo saw that there was not a moment to be lost. If this ruffian should once get beneath

the trap-door, the murder he meant to perpetrate (and of his intention there could not remain a doubt) might be committed in safety. Impressed with this idea, he sprung forward. The man turned round at the noise, and on the instant received Rhinaldo's sword to the very hilt in his breast. He fell into the vault, uttering a deep groan—the lantern was clenched in his hand—the trap-door fell into its place as he descended, and Rhinaldo, with Rugiero, who had just entered the room, remained involved in the most impenetrable darkness.

CHAP.

CHAP. III.

ASTONISHED at this circumstance, Rhinaldo paused for a few seconds; but recollecting that it was possible the light might not be extinguished by the fall, he felt for the iron

D 4 ring,

ring, and lifted the trap-door. His conjectures proved to be right—the lanthorn lay on the floor, clasped in the hand of the dead man—and the flame within it was burning the horn. Rugiero picked it up, and having adjusted the candle within it, began to survey the vault into which they had descended.

It was narrow, long, and low; and at the end of it was a very small arched door-way, and a door apparently very thick, and formidably secured with bolts and bars. Rugiero pushed the door with his hand, and was suddenly
alarmed

alarmed by a deep groan from the place, whatever it might be, to which it opened. He had not time, however, to ruminate long on this circumstance; his master called to him in a very low voice from the other end of the vault, and when he came near, made him a sign to listen; he did so, and heard distinctly the footsteps of a man walking in a hasty and agitated step over their heads. Every now and then he paused, as if to listen to something; and after a few minutes, they heard exclaiming in a low tone "Fabian!"

This

This was repeated several times;—
and Rhinaldo at length perceiving that
it was addressed towards the vault, an-
swered in as hollow a voice as he could
assume, “Here!”

“Is it done?” exclaimed the un-
known person from above. “It is,”
answered Rhinaldo. “’Tis well,”
resumed the voice from above. “Con-
vey the body into the vaulted room—
lay it out on the table, and cover it with
the mantle which I shall send you.”—
They then heard the steps of this per-
son moving towards the door, and the
found of them soon died away.

Rhinaldo,

Rhinaldo, who now grew more anxious than ever to discover this mystery, took his resolution on the spot, and, with the assistance of Rugiero, stripping the doublet and cloak from the body of the man he had killed, he put them on, pulling his hair over his face, and disguising himself as artfully as he could with the blood which still flowed from the wound he had inflicted. He then put on Rugiero's hat, which being much plainer than his own, was well calculated to give additional concealment to his countenance ; and, with the assistance of this steady and faithful domestic, lifting the trap-door, conveyed the
body,

body into the vaulted chamber above, and stretched it on the table as directed.

This done, they prepared to secure the messenger who should be sent with the mantle, and who they judged would prove the person they had before seen in company with the man who was slain. In order to effect this, Rugiero, drawing his sword, placed himself close to the door of the room, just within the portal, while his master stood at the front of the table, on which the body was placed, and so much in front of the lanthorn, which he had con-

trived should throw but a dim gleam of light, that a person entering the room, could only distinguish the figure of a man, but was not enabled to discover who, or what he might be.

They had not waited on their post many minutes before, as they had conjectured, the person they so lately saw entered the room, carrying the mantle on his shoulders. He walked strait towards Rhinaldo, to whom he said,—
“ Fabian! my Lord requires you to attend him at the head of the great staircase.”

He

He had scarcely uttered these words, before Rugiero, advancing from the door, seized him by the collar, and Rhinaldo doing the same, the fellow fell down speechless with horror. They raised him immediately, and Rhinaldo warned him, that to utter a single exclamation would prove fatal to him.—He fell on his knees, and in the most earnest manner entreated them to spare his life. Rhinaldo told him that his safety wholly depended on his conduct. “Disguise nothing from us,” said he, “and you have nothing to fear.”—“Sir,” said the trembling wretch, “I will conceal nothing, but my Lord,
by

by this time, waits for Fabian and myself, at the head of the great staircase."

After a moment's pause, Rhinaldo said,

"I think I can trust thee so far. Thou shalt attend me to thy Lord—but mark well my words—the very moment in which, by a single word or action, thou attemptest to betray me, I here swear, whatever may be the consequence of it, shall be the last of thy life."

Rhinaldo then threw the mantle over the body of the ghastly Fabian, and commanding the trembling wretch before him to conduct him to the great staircase, he gave the lanthorn into his hands,

hands, ordering him to precede him a few paces, but, at his peril, to keep the light turned from him.

In this manner they proceeded, leaving Rugiero in the vaulted room.— They had scarcely gained the foot of the staircase, before they perceived a man walking at the top of it, with a small taper in his hand. He was richly dressed, but had a ferocity in his aspect that did not escape unmarked by Rhinaldo, who kept as much behind his conductor as possible.

The

The man at the head of the staircase no sooner perceived them, than he ordered them, in an impatient tone, to follow him, and turning hastily, walked along the gallery, into which the gleam of light had led the steps of Rhinaldo, when he was last on the staircase. He passed through the same chamber which he had before passed, entered the passage, ascended the narrow staircase, and shoved back the pannel in the little room above it. He then opened the door, and discovered to Rhinaldo a scene, which excited his utmost attention. A few steps descended from the door he had opened,

into a lofty and spacious apartment, the furniture of which, though one could perceive that it had been once magnificent, appeared very old and decayed.

At a table, on which was placed a dim lamp and a crucifix, he could perceive a lady richly drest. Her elbow rested on the table, and her cheek on her hand. She was reading. The man who preceded Rhinaldo turned to him and his companion, and ordered them to stay without. He then proceeded down the steps. The lady cast her eyes towards him as he entered, threw
them

them with a supplicating look towards heaven, and again fixed them on her book.

He advanced slowly into the room, and beckening the lady, in a stern tone of voice ordered her to follow him.

“What more am I to suffer?” said she. “What farther scene of savage cruelty am I to witness?”

He beckened Rhinaldo and his companion into the room. The lady started wildly when she saw them. “Nay,” said she, “if I am to be murdered,

perpetrate your crime on this spot."—

Saying this, she seized the crucifix; clasped it to her bosom, and fell on her knees before the book, which lay open on the table. The person who had caused this alarm then took her under one arm, and making a sign to Rhinaldo to do the same by the other, she suffered herself to be conducted, without a murmur, whithersoever they should choose, still holding the crucifix in her hand.

Rhinaldo, struck with compassion at the situation of this lady, was repeatedly tempted to whisper comfort in her ear;

ear; but he thought a premature discovery of his design might in all probability baffle every attempt he might make to serve her; he therefore proceeded, holding her still by the arm, 'till they gained the vaulted chamber, when the person who had conducted her to it thus addressed her: "Adulterers!"—She raised herself from the arm of Rhinaldo. "Monster!" said she, "at least, spare my fame—thou knowest the falshood of that insinuation,"——"That mantle,"—said he, pointing to that which lay over the body of Fabian, "was the work of your hands, and designed doubtless as

a present to me." "Never,"—answered the lady,—“heaven knows.—They to whose power it was my lot to bow, knew too well that it was not designed for thee.”

“Perhaps,” returned he, with an air of the most savage triumph, “it was designed for him who now wears it.” At this the lady started—she looked wild with apprehension and terror—she advanced towards the table—she clasped her hands together, and eagerly looked on the mantle—“It cannot be,” said she—“you are not such a monster.” The man advanced, and
with

with a barbarous readiness, seized the taper which his attendant carried, and held it before her. "Lift up the mantle," said he, to Rhinaldo. Rhinaldo lifted it, fixing his eyes full upon him, and discovered the body of Fabian.

"Good heavens!" cried the lady; "what can all this mean?" She staggered some paces back, and was caught in the arms of Rugiero, who had advanced to be ready to assist his master upon occasion.—The man himself seemed petrified with astonishment upon seeing the corpse—in a few seconds he drew his sword.

“ Confummate villain !” said he ;
and he flew at Rhinaldo. Rhinaldo,
who watched his eye, drew at the
same time, beat down the thrust
which was made, with extreme rapi-
dity, at his breast, and, returning it,
buried his sword in his adversary’s
body ; but perceived, on recovering
his guard, that he was himself
wounded in the thigh ; he, how-
ever, advanced towards the lady, and
seeing her somewhat recovered, at-
tempted to explain to her that the per-
son for whose life she seemed to labour
under such apprehensions, was proba-
bly safe—but he poured this intelli-
gence

gence into a deaf ear. Harassed to death by the cruelties of her oppressor, and the scene she had witnessed, she seemed insensible to all around her.— Rhinaldo and Rugiero conducted her slowly to the apartment in which they had found her, and placed her on the bed.

Rhinaldo then inquired whether there were any female servants in the house, and hearing that there were two, he went, attended by the companion of the deceased Fabian, to awaken them, and in a short time procured their attendance on the lady.

After

After taking care that every possible assistance should be given to her, Rhinaldo turned his thoughts once more towards the vaulted chamber, and leaving the lady under the protection of his faithful Rugiero, he ordered Gaspard (for so was Fabian's comrade called) to attend him; and again proceeded down the stairs, determined to explore the vault, in which the miscreant, he had so lately punished, had met the reward of his iniquities.

As they entered the room, the first object that struck them was the body of the person who had just fallen by Rhinaldo's

Rhinaldo's sword. Rhinaldo held the taper to his face, and contemplating his features, though now fixed by the agonies of death,—“Is not this,” said he, to Gaspard, “the Lord of St. Amand?” Gaspard answered in the affirmative. Rhinaldo felt the body; but no signs of life remained. He then ordered Gaspard to raise the trap-door, and followed him into the vault. They proceeded along this dreary subterraneous passage, 'till they came to the little door at the end. This, after some labour, they unbolted, for the fastenings were numerous and strong, and descending by a narrow broken staircase,

staircase, entered as dismal a dungeon, as the most gloomy imagination could pourtray.

In one corner they descried the figure of a man, seated on a large stone, to which he was chained. As they opened the door, he cast a languid eye towards them, and exclaimed, "I shall at last then find an end to my miseries! Do not fear to perform your commission—but, if you have any compassion left, bear the ring which you will find in my bosom to the wife of your lord."

Rhinaldo

Rhinaldo advanced towards him.—
“Have you,” resumed the prisoner,
“compassion enough to promise me
that favour?” “Count Tancred!”
said Rhinaldo, astonished at the voice
which addressed him. “My friend—
my ——”

The prisoner leaped in surprise from
his seat, but, restrained by his chains,
he sunk down again. “Know ye not
Rhinaldo?” said the young knight,
and sprung forward to embrace him.
The prisoner folded his arms about his
friend; but the surprise proved too
much for him, and he sunk speechless

on

on Rhinaldo's bosom. In a little time, however, he recovered himself.

“Gracious heaven!” exclaimed he, “to meet Rhinaldo in the place of my executioner.” “Let us rid you,” said Rhinaldo, “of these chains.” The chains which secured him were fastened by a strong bolt round each leg. Rhinaldo thought that if his boots were cut off, the link would prove large enough to slip over his foot. He asked Gaspard for a knife, who went in search of one, but in ascending the stairs, found the dagger of Fabian, which had dropped from his girdle as he fell; with this he returned.

returned. Count Tancred's boots were slit down and taken off, but the link was smaller than they had supposed—it was necessary they should be unlocked or filed.

Gaspard then told Rhinaldo, that the key of the Count's fetters was probably in Fabian's pocket, which was immediately searched, and Count Tancred, whose impatience would only suffer them to unlock the link which fastened him to the stone, wrapt his chains round his arm, and followed his friend out of the dungeon. His mind was agitated by a most insatiable curiosity—

riosity—he asked a thousand questions in a moment. “I will lead you,”—said Rhinaldo, “to one who will assist me in my detail—for, to say the truth, I am, at present, rather weary.”

Rhinaldo was at this time accompanying his friend up the steps of the vault. “You look faint,” said Count Tancred;—“You bleed too, my friend!” They reached the vaulted chamber, where the Count was finally freed from his fetters.

“Here,” said Rhinaldo, “lie your foes.” Tancred surveyed the bodies.

“Merciless

“ Merciless barbarian !” said he, as he contemplated that of the Count;—
 “ Why was not thy punishment reserved for me ? But Rhinaldo,” continued he, in a faltering voice, “ there is —— a —— beauteous and wretched victim —— ”

Rhinaldo threw himself into a chair.
 “ I feel,” said he, “ too much embarrassed, by a slight wound I have received, to accompany you up stairs.— This person will conduct you where your question will be more efficaciously resolved ; but stay—it will be proper, perhaps, to secure the fidelity of your
 VOL. I. F guide—

guide—so saying, Rhinaldo pointed to the sword of the Count de St. Amand, which lay on the floor. “But you, my friend,” said Tancred, taking up the sword,—“You want assistance.”—“You will find my old servant, Rugiero, above,” said Rhinaldo, “send him to me.”

Count Tancred now quitted Rhinaldo, and, under the direction of Gaspard, sought the apartment of the lady. Rhinaldo had not been left many minutes in the vaulted chamber, before Rugiero attended him. He examined the wound in his thigh, and found it
slight

slight indeed; but by subsequent irritation much inflamed. He dressed it as well as the little assistance he was enabled to procure on the spot would permit him, when Rhinaldo, addressing him with an air which marked the confidence he reposed in him, said, "It will be impossible for me to pursue my journey in this state—mark attentively the commands I am about to lay upon you—make with all speed towards the capital, and at the third house to the right, in the narrow street which leads from the little square to the back of the palace gardens, you will find my old serjeant, and your former comrade,

Bernard Tilly; he will take care of your horse—remain in his house 'till night, and when you hear the palace clock strike twelve, repair to the high bridge——there you will find a man walking muffled up in his cloak, with his hat drawn over his eyes—accost this man immediately, and say to him, “*yes or no?*” If he should answer “*yes,*” repair to me with all speed.— If “*no,*” follow him without speaking, and whatsoever you may judge may be for my service, execute it suddenly and boldly. Know, Rugiero, that the task I impose on you requires presence of mind and intrepidity; but

I have

I have had sufficient experience of your heart and mind, to bid me rely with confidence on you. You will perhaps want money in the progress of the undertaking—take this ring,”

Rhinaldo here presented a ring to Rugiero.—“ Call on Ben Napthali, who lives to the west of the great square, and he will supply you, on sight of it, with whatever money you may want.”

Rugiero, though he knew not what it was to disobey his master, and felt himself honored by the confidence re-

posed in him, yet could not help suggesting that he felt some uneasiness at leaving him in his present state—wounded, and in the house of his enemies. But Rhinaldo soothed his apprehensions, by telling him that Count Tancred was with him, and that there were, as he had learned, only three male domestics in the house.

Rugiero, after conducting his master up stairs, who found Count Tancred and the lady in a more convenient apartment than that in which she had been confined, to which the women, who had been called to attend her, had

had humanity enough to remove her, went to seek for his horse, and having found both his own and that of his master under the porch, from which they had not moved, he set off by the light of the dawn, which just now began to appear, in search of some place in which he might find provender for them: His eye soon directed him to a building, resembling a stable, which was in many places unroofed, but which still afforded a tolerable shelter. He led his horses gently in his hand, and opening the door, discovered that he had not been deceived. In this stable he found a man occupied in sad-

dling a horse. This man started at seeing Rugiero, and let fall the saddle, which he was lifting to throw over the horse's back.

Rugiero clapped his hand to his sword, and the man seizing the horse hastily by the bridle, drew him, unfaddled as he was, out at an opposite door. Rugiero, encumbered with two horses, knew not readily what to do. In an instant, however, he quitted them both, and rushed on foot through the door at which this person had fled. He found the man already mounted on the bare back of the

the horse, who seemed to be possessed of much fire, for he sprung forward in a moment with considerable agility.—Rugiero sprung forward also, but in vain. The man pressed his horse eagerly, and, circling the house, gained the corner of the moat at which Rugiero and his master had passed, and driving his steed resolutely at it, passed it without accident, and fled with speed into the thickest of the forest.

Rugiero, at first, thought of pursuing the fugitive, and hastened back for his horse; but, upon a little reflection, he gave up this design. His horse was
exhausted

exhausted with fatigue, and the want of provender, while that of the fugitive was probably fresh. - It would, besides, be almost impossible to trace him in a wild so trackless and deserted as the forest; he therefore contented himself with searching the stables for provender, which, having obtained, he placed before his master's horse and his own, and returned once more into the house to acquaint Rhinaldo with the circumstance which had just occurred.

In passing the door, an impulse, which he could not resist, induced him first to turn into the vaulted chamber,
and

and he there imagined he discovered cause of the singular circumstance which had just occurred. He found the body of the Count de St. Amand removed from the middle of the room, where he had left it, to a corner close under the window, which was opened to admit the light of the dawn, probably for the purpose of contemplating the face of the deceased.

He had now little doubt but that one of the servants had, during the period in which he conducted Rhinaldo upstairs, entered the vaulted chamber, and

and discovered the death of the Count St. Amand.

This circumstance, as he judged, was of extreme importance to the safety of his master, and he hastened to inform Rhinaldo of it, who gave him full credit for the fidelity of his attachment towards him, but continued to urge him strongly to hasten his departure.

Rugiero, therefore, returned to the stable, and his horse being somewhat refreshed, he led him to the draw-bridge,

bridge, and letting it down, passed over it, directing his course towards that part of the forest from which he judged that his master and himself had deviated, when the storm had compelled them to seek refuge in the mansion.

CHAP.

CHAP. IV.

THE Countess St. Amand, for such, by the reproaches of the Count, Rhinaldo perceived her to be, was now much recovered from the recent indisposition which the horrors of

3 the

the night had caused. Though she could not but feel deeply and awfully impressed by the singular events which had taken place, she did not affect any extraordinary degree of concern for the death of a man, whose cruel and ferocious disposition had rendered him the detestation of all who knew him; her health indeed seemed to have been impaired by the inhuman conduct of this barbarian towards her, and the roses had faded in her cheek. She was, however, notwithstanding this, extremely beautiful; and the benevolence of her heart was conspicuous in the gratitude which she did not cease to

to express towards her deliverer. The concern she felt at hearing of his wound, could scarcely be soothed by the tender attention of Tancred, nor by the repeated assurances of Rhinaldo himself, that the wound was trifling, and that he had a thorough confidence in the skill of his domestic, which he had in some similar instances previously experienced.

The day had now completely dawned, and the Countess proposed to Tancred and Rhinaldo, that they should take some repose after the fatigues they had undergone; but the intelligence
which

which they had recently received from Rugiero, of the escape of the servant, was of too serious a nature to permit them, for the present, to enjoy a thought of repose; and anxious as they severally were to have the wonderful events of the night explained to them, they were compelled to delay the gratification of their curiosity, and consult together on the measures to be pursued in a moment so pregnant with danger to themselves.

Rugiero, in the mean time, pursued his journey with as much speed as possible, and arrived, without meeting any

extraordinary adventure, at the capital. He reached the house of Bernard Tilly, and, having put up his horse, waited, not without anxiety, for the eventful hour of twelve. The clock from the neighbouring convent at length struck, and Rugiero snatching up his cloak and his sword, hastened towards the high bridge. He found, as he passed, the streets deserted. The inhabitants had all retired to bed—he gained the high bridge, and as he advanced towards the centre of it, he discovered a man wrapt in a cloak, walking with a slow and thoughtful pace towards him. This man passed Ru-

giero, without seeming to notice him; when Rugiero, according to his instructions, put to him the question,—“YES OR NO?” The man answered immediately, “NO;” and wrapping his cloak about him, quickened his pace, and proceeded forward, without so much as looking at Rugiero.

Rugiero followed him through several winding streets, 'till he turned into a passage so narrow that it involved them in compleat darkness. Rugiero continued, however, to follow the man, 'till the passage opened into a kind of square, which appeared to be in a state

of desolation. The ground was rough, uneven, and full of hillocks. Their path was interrupted by fragments of stone, bricks, and rubbish; and the stench which arose around them, betrayed it to be the residence of the meanest and most wretched inhabitants of the metropolis.

They at last reached a stone building, seemingly of very ancient structure, the entrance to which was a gothic door, so low that a moderate sized man must stoop considerably at entering it, and very narrow.

At

At this door the man tapped gently, and a small grated wicket in the middle of it was immediately unlocked.—Some words in a low voice passed—the door opened, as far as a chain, which was placed across it on the inside, would permit—and two men, with drawn daggers, appeared as centinels on the inside, Rugiero and his conductor were admitted—they passed under the chain, and the door was immediately closed.

They passed through a long winding passage, and up a narrow flight of stone stairs, at the top of which they tapped at a door, and were admitted into a large,

gloomy, and almost unfurnished room, illuminated by a single lamp, which hung over a table.

Several men, whose persons could not, on account of the gloomy light which the lamp diffused, be very accurately distinguished, were walking about the room, conversing with each other. When Rugiero was admitted, his guide approached them, and having said something to them in a low voice, passed out of a door at the farther end of the room, and in a few minutes returned, accompanied by a gentleman with a taper in his hand, who
ad-

advanced hastily towards Rugiero; but stopped short when he had approached near enough to distinguish him, and said, with signs of disappointment, "how is this? Is not your lord here?"

Rugiero, who knew him to be a young nobleman bound by the strictest ties of friendship to his lord, explained to him shortly the accident which had prevented Rhinaldo's arrival; but added, modestly, that whatever service they might think proper to employ him in, he hoped and trusted he should go through it with firmness.

“ I do not doubt it,” said the nobleman: “ but your lord’s counsel and conduct on a day like this——his absence affects us—it is, as it were, a limb lopped from our enterprise.”

He then turned towards the remainder of the company, and entered into a long conversation with them.

Rugiero, by the light of the taper, which this gentleman had brought, added to that of the lamp, had an opportunity of viewing more distinctly the figures of these persons. They seemed all armed and accoutred for immediate

mediate service. The nobleman who addressed him, though not completely armed, had on his cuirasse, and other pieces, which were not sufficiently cumbersome to prevent his acting on foot.

After having conversed for some time with the rest, this nobleman turned to Rugiero, and bade him follow him. They passed through the door at the end of the room, and arrived at a small chamber, in which there was a common truckle bed and two chairs.

“ This,

"This," said the nobleman, smiling, "is my apartment. But come," added he, "let us lose no time." He passed through this apartment, and descending by a staircase on the other side of it, entered a room, in which were several armed men, some walking, some sitting down, and others lying on benches. Several pieces of armour hung round the walls, and swords and pikes seemed scattered carelessly about.

"Come, my friends," said the nobleman, as he entered—"our hour is arrived;" twelve of them then took
up

up their arms, and the nobleman, followed by Rugiero, led them to the gate at which the latter had entered, which was opened at their approach.

They passed over the ruins, and keeping the most profound silence, gained the new bridge. They did not pass over it, but passing down on one side of the river, discovered at no great distance a boat, in which sat two men.

These men arose at their approach, and the nobleman having said something to them, addressed Rugiero as follows:—

“ I must

“ I must now leave you, as my presence is demanded elsewhere. These men will conduct you to the gardens at the back of the palace—there, if fortune befriends us, you will find the princess Isabel. This will prove an eventful night. Your task will probably require fortitude and presence of mind. If you have the good fortune to effect the escape of the princess, convey her with all speed to the place whence we now came.”

Saying this, the nobleman, with four of his comrades, departed, leaving Rugiero with the rest, who immediately

mediately embarked in the boat prepared for them. Rugiero now perceived that the two men in the boat were also armed.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

THEY dropped silently down with the tide, rowing as gently as possible, lest the dashing of their oars, amid the stillness of the night, should create some alarm.

When

When they arrived at the back of the palace gardens, which opened by a beautiful and lofty terrace towards the river. They were surprised by the sound of many voices, and could faintly discover several persons moving on the terrace. They now took in their oars entirely, and as the tide carried them slowly opposite the terrace, preserved the most profound silence.— They did not, however, execute this so successfully, as not to be perceived. They were challenged from the terrace, and ordered to bring to. In spite, however, of this order, they
still

still continued to drop down with the tide, about the middle of the channel, when they were alarmed by the report of an arquebuss, evidently levelled at them; the shot, however, probably went over their heads, as they did not perceive any effect from it. They now thought it necessary again to ply their oars, which they did with some effect, but remitted their labour upon hearing a bugle sound in the garden, at the call of which the soldiers, whom they had seen upon the terrace, suddenly disappeared, and left the gardens wrapt in total silence.

Rugiero,

Rugiero, upon this, resolved to land there, and ordering the boat to pull in gently towards the terrace, he threw a ladder of ropes, with which the boatmen were purposely provided, over the parapet; but the breadth of the wall prevented the grapplings, which were fixed to the end of the ladder, taking hold. They then pushed the boat towards a large flight of stone stairs, which descended from a magnificent portico about the centre of the terrace, and entangling their grapplings with some wrought iron which united the gateway with the parapet, Rugiero ascended the ladder, and was followed

by the whole of his party, except the two persons he had found in the boat, who still remained to take care of it. They paced silently along the terrace, and sought the most retired part of the garden, intending to conceal themselves in the bowers with which it abounded.

They had not proceeded far, before they discovered two women, who passed swiftly between the trees. Terror seemed to lend them wings. Rugiero and his party had scarcely time to observe them, before they saw their progress impeded by a party of armed men, whose leader, advancing towards
the

the women, laid hold on the foremost of them by the arm, while his party furrounded them.

Rugiero, who immediately conjectured that this must be the Lady Isabel, ordered his men to stand to their arms, and advanced resolutely towards them. The women shrieked, and Rugiero heard the leader of the opposite band exclaim, "It is the Lady Isabel—secure her."

Upon hearing this, Rugiero rushed on him, and was resolutely seconded by his men, one of whom gently led the

H 2

women

women towards the terrace, while the rest, placing their backs towards them, in a firm phalanx, covered the retreat. In this manner they gained the terrace; but the exclamations of the opposite party, who called loudly for assistance, and the clashing of their swords, had by this time so far increased the number of their enemies, that though they had gained the portico at which the ladder was suspended, they found themselves so pressed, that they began to give up every hope of escape. They had found means, however, with the assistance of the men below, to convey the two women safely to the boat, and
calling

calling to those below to push off, had no thoughts but of selling their lives as dearly as possible—when the attention of the foe was suddenly diverted by a violent attack on the gate of the portico, and in an instant Rugiero found his little forlorn party succoured by a strong reinforcement, who mounted the terrace by the rope ladder, which still hung suspended to the iron work of the portico.

The gate in a short time was opened by assistance from the inside, and a considerable party, who had disembarked from boats which lay moored

to the stone staircase below, rushed at once into the garden. The enemy found it in vain to contend longer, and made a precipitate retreat, in which they were closely pressed by the party which had just arrived.

Rugiero, who had luckily (though very hardly pressed) escaped without a wound, was now preparing to descend the ladder, in order to secure the retreat of the Lady Isabel, when he was accosted by a person belonging to the party just entered, who, calling him by his name, asked him, if the lady was safe?

Rugiero

Rugiero knew this person immediately to be the nobleman he had so lately quitted, and his surprise at this unexpected meeting kept him for a moment silent.

“ We have been betrayed,” added this nobleman. “ Our troops have met with a warm reception in the square, and I have embarked with this reserve to try whether this part of the palace would not prove less impregnable than the front; but where,” continued he, “ is the lady Isabel?”

Rugiero told him that she was in the boat below, and he descended immediately by the ladder. In about five minutes he returned. "Rugiero," said he, "we have been deceived.—The lady in the boat is not the Lady Isabel; she is, however, a lady, in whose welfare I interest myself much. The duty of the moment will not permit me to stay—the Lady Isabel is confined in her chamber in the first story on the left front of the western tower. I will leave a trusty few for the guard of the boat, and with thirty more, whom I will spare to reinforce your detachment, you must attempt to

rescue the lady." Having remained just long enough to effect this arrangement, the nobleman hastened towards the palace.

Rugiero now took the command of the men who were delivered to him by the nobleman, and fought the western tower. He perceived the window on the left front—it was about the height of two pikes from the ground, and grated with iron—he perceived that the chamber within was lighted up; he had taken the precaution to bring from the boat the ladder of ropes; he tied two pikes together, and, hoisting the ladder,

der, fixed the grapplings to the bars of the windows and ascended. The light in the chamber grew every moment more and more vivid. What were the horrors which Rugiero felt when, upon gaining the window, he perceived the furniture and hangings of the chamber enveloped in flames.

He had scarcely time to reflect on this dreadful spectacle, before he heard the clashing of swords, and perceived that his men were attacked below.—The garden was again in tumult, and the party which had lately landed were compelled to retreat to their boats,

boats, which they did in much confusion.

Rugiero's guard stood boldly on their defence, but were presently overpowered by numbers, and compelled to seek their safety with the rest. In this confusion Rugiero stood supported by the gratings of the window, 'till the flames began to crack the panes of the casement, and his post was become too hot to be longer tenable. He now began to descend, when, either from the melting of the solder, through the increasing heat of the walls, or from the rottenness of the iron-work itself,

the

the grating gave way, and Rugiero fell to the ground.

He lay, for some time, stunned by his fall, and upon recovering himself, found that the tumult in the garden had in a great measure subsided. He had luckily received no material damage from this accident, and now thought of effecting his escape; but reflecting for a moment on his situation, he judged it useless to proceed towards the terrace, as the boats had probably by this time quitted the shore.

As

As he walked slowly forwards, doubtful what he should do, he perceived before him the body of a man, who had probably been slain in the late skirmish, and who was dressed in the habit of the king's guard.

Rugiero hesitated not a moment, but stripping him of his hat, his buff coat, and bandelier, and placing his arquebuss on his shoulder, he fell in with a party who were in an irregular manner retiring towards the palace, and insinuating himself among them, soon gained the great square in the front of the building.

He

He here found most of the troops in the city drawn up, and under arms, while a party were employed in extinguishing the fire which had filled his mind with so much horror.

Musing on the dreadful fate which had probably attended the unfortunate lady, for whose sake solely he seemed to have been commanded on his present service, and shuddering at the bare idea of communicating to his lord intelligence so pregnant with calamity, he quitted the square, unperceived by some sentries who were posted at the different avenues, but who were employed

ployed in drinking, and gained the high bridge. From the high bridge, he strove to retrace his former steps towards the spot on which he had first seen the noble friend of his lord. In this he succeeded; but, on his arrival, he had fresh cause for astonishment and alarm. He saw the ruins almost covered with dead bodies—a large party of the king's troops were still there under arms—the building, at the little door of which he had been so cautiously admitted, was smoking in ruins, and, opposite to it, were placed two small pieces of artillery. In short, there was every

every appearance that this house had been defended to the last extremity.

Rugiero retired with a melancholy step from this scene of slaughter, and regaining the house of Bernard Tilly, he mounted his horse, and prepared to convey to his master the heavy and heart-breaking intelligence with which he felt his mind oppressed. At the eastern gate, through which it was necessary that he should attempt his escape, he judged that he should not be able to pass without some difficulty.— He resolved, however, to depend on
the

the coat he wore, and the tale he should be able to fabricate, in all probability this would scarcely have succeeded; but he was not put to the trial—he found the post deserted—the guard had been recently attacked, and the gate forced—he now took the road towards the place where he had left Rhinaldo.

CHAP. VI.

RUGIERO rode on, wrapt in
mournful meditation, 'till he came
to the skirts of a wood. As he entered
the hollow way, which led through this
wood, he heard a noise of the gallop-
5 ing

ing of horses at a distance behind him. He turned round, and perceived a troop of horsemen, at the distance of about a quarter of a mile, pressing with all their speed towards him.

As he did not think it prudent to encounter these men, he put his horse forward, and perceiving a narrow path winding through the thicker on his right hand, he turned his horse into it, and giving him the spur, and defending his face as well as he could with his hand, he speedily lost sight of the road. He pursued the path, which became gradually more open, 'till thinking

himself well concealed from the horsemen, whose approach had alarmed him, he paused. He had the satisfaction to hear them pass along the road, without attempting to turn out of it. He then thought of returning the way he came, but perceived the thicket so deeply entangled, that he was compelled to pursue the path strait forward.

It extended gradually, as he proceeded, 'till it opened into a green sward, shaped like a little amphitheatre, and furrounded, on all sides, by the wood. As he entered this place,
he

he perceived the back of a man, who was gliding through the trees at the other end of it. He stopped his horse when he perceived this, and, as he was meditating on the path he should pursue, he was surrounded by four men, who rushed out of the surrounding thickets so suddenly, that they had seized upon his bridle and sword before he was aware of their approach.

They told him he was their prisoner, and, bidding him dismount, tied his hands behind him, and led him thro' the thickest of the underwood,—his horse being conducted by one of them

slowly behind. After a toilsome walk of some length, their path being interrupted by briars and matted weeds, and the hands of his conductors employed in removing the branches by which they were perpetually interrupted. They arrived at the foot of a rock, gradually sloping from a prodigious height, crowned on the summit with lofty and majestic pines, and clad to the very foot with brush wood, intermingled with small dwarf trees.

Beneath this rock were some cabins, freshly constructed with the branches of trees, and one indeed scarcely

scarcely yet begun. Several persons were employed in the labour of rearing them, whose arms lay by them.

Rugiero was conducted to the largest of the huts, which was built so as to form a kind of vestibule to a cave, which seemed to have been scooped by nature in the solid rock. From this hut a person advanced to meet him, who seemed, as he could collect from the behaviour of the rest, vested with some authority.

The men who had seized Rugiero informed this person, that being de-

tached for forage, they had fallen in with the prisoner as he was attempting to discover their retreat, and, as was beyond all doubt confirmed by his appearance, in order to betray it to the king.

The person whom they addressed, turning to Rugiero, asked him how he came into that situation. "But," added he, "his garb is evidence enough of his intention—we must teach him, that despair has rendered all attempts against us dangerous—let him be conveyed aside, and well guarded—we will speedily determine

on

on his fate. Rugiero begged to be heard; but the person who had given these orders turning his back upon him, the men who had him in custody were about to convey him away, when he perceived an officer of a superior presence approach.

This officer held by the hand a lady, plainly but handsomely drest. What was the satisfaction of Rugiero, when he discovered in him the very nobleman under whose auspices he had conducted the business of the preceding evening.

The

The nobleman to whom his case was referred, knew him immediately; ordered him to be unbound, and taking him into the cave, asked him by what singular fortune he had escaped from the calamities which attended the unfortunate events of the night.

The apartment in the cave was lofty and spacious. It received a degree of light, just sufficient to render it habitable, by an oblique perforation in the roof, which joined to the surface of the rock at some considerable height above the entrance. In this apartment, which had in former times been the residence
of

of a hermit, were three chairs and a table, carved rudely in wood, and seemingly very old. At the end was a rude altar, formed in the solid rock, having a crucifix carved with some ingenuity over it; and in the corner of the cave lay a small bedstead of wood, which was covered with fern, newly gathered.

Rugiero related to the young nobleman, with horror in his countenance, the dreadful object which encountered him at Lady Isabel's window; and the circumstances which attended his escape.

“ Heaven

“Heaven be praised!” said this nobleman, who was called Count Anselmo;—“all then is yet well. This lady,” said he, turning towards the lady, whom he held by the hand, “is indebted to you for her escape last night. You mistook her for the Lady Isabel, to whom indeed she is nearly related. Upon the ill success of our last attempt, I had the good fortune to reach the boat in which you left this lady, and the equally good fortune to fall down the river under the very walls of the fort, which guards the entrance of the city, unperceived. We have trembled for the fate of the Lady Isabel, who,

who, upon the discovery of our plot, was closely confined. But all, I trust, is yet well. Rugiero," continued he, "you must undertake another journey to the city, for your master's service; but, as the alarm is spread, it will be necessary for you to disguise yourself. Where," said he, speaking to one of his attendants, "is the woodman, whose guests we are?"

A poor fellow was presently called to him, who was employed in finishing one of the cabins, but who was closely watched, lest he should make his escape.

"You

“ You had better,” said Anselmo to Rugiero, “ change dresses with this fellow. In his garb, and driving the sorry beast on which he loads his faggots, you may easily gain admittance into the city.”

To this proposal Rugiero immediately consented. He disguised himself like a peasant, and, loading an ass belonging to the woodman with faggots, he waited the commands of Anselmo.

“ When you have gained the city,” said the Count, “ repair to ——” here he paused —— “ Hath your lord,”
said

said he, "given you any order to receive money in the city?"

Rugiero produced the ring he had received from Rhinaldo.

"All is right," continued the Count. "Ask of Ben Naphthali a thousand crowns in gold; when you have got it, wait patiently 'till the clock strikes nine; repair then to the colonade in the front of the town-house, where, during the day, the merchants assemble. You will there find the person whom you saw on the high bridge; but be extremely cautious how you act.

Your

Your life, and the welfare of your lord, will perhaps depend on your care.— Do not, therefore, whomsoever you may see there, address him; but place yourself with your back against the fifth pillar of the colonade from the right. If the person, seeing you in that situation, should ask you the question you formerly asked, “*yes or no,*” he is your man. Deliver to him the thousand crowns, and attend to the orders he will give you—do not, however, loiter long in the streets after this interview, as the city patrolle will soon afterwards mount guard.”

Rugiero,

Rugiero, armed with these instructions, soon departed ; but fearing, notwithstanding his disguise, an examination at the city gates, he adopted the precaution of sewing the ring within the lining of his pack saddle. Nor did this care prove needless—at the gates he underwent a strict search ; but having taken great care that nothing about him should convey the slightest suspicion of his being in any degree superiour to the rank of the peasant he appeared, they suffered him to pass.

As soon as he had conveyed his load of faggots to a wretched inn, to which

the woodmen usually resorted, he prepared himself to execute the orders of Count Anselmo. He procured the money of Ben Naphthali, and repaired, when the clock struck nine, to the place appointed. He had scarcely placed himself against the pillar, when the man he had formerly seen walked slowly by him, so close as to brush him with his cloak. After a short time he returned, and perceiving nobody near, addressed him in the words he had been taught to expect.

Upon this, Rugiero drew a canvas bag from his breast, in which were con-
tained

tained the thousand crowns he had received from Naphthali, and gave them to the stranger, who, putting them under his cloak, told him to be in the same spot exactly in six hours—but to take particular care, if possible, to avoid the patrol.

Rugiero returned to his miserable inn, and throwing himself on a truckle bed, waited with impatience the expiration of the six hours. The clock at length struck three—he arose, and hastened towards the place of appointment. He had not proceeded many paces before, at the corner of a street,

he met the patrol. He started aside, to avoid the serjeant, whose suspicions were so far aroused by this circumstance, that he immediately sprung forward, and seized him by the collar. He was soon surrounded, and after a few questions taken into custody, and marched towards the guard-house.

He had not proceeded far beyond the town-house, when the guard, in whose custody he was, were encountered by another party. As soon as these parties came close to each other, they halted, which they had scarcely done, when a man springing forward
from

from the midst of the party which had just arrived, seized Rugiero by the collar, and said to the commander of the detachment he was with, "This is the traitor—this is the very man we are in search of—I charge you seize him."

The commander, upon these words, advanced towards Rugiero, gave him into the custody of his own party, after a few words had passed between him and the serjeant of the other detachment, when the parties separated, each returning the way they came.

The astonishment of Rugiero kept him perfectly silent under this accusation; nor was that astonishment lessened, by his perceiving that the person accusing him was the very man to whom he had so lately delivered the thousand crowns, and who had promised to meet him.

He was now convinced that he was betrayed, and that his own life, and the dearest interests of his lord, must fall a sacrifice to his ill fortune. Yet how it had occurred he could not divine.—Wrapt in these melancholy reflections, he walked on 'till they came to the remains

mains of the old palace, a building which had long been converted into a prison, for which use one would have thought, from its appearance, it had been originally designed.

In an outward apartment belonging to this place, the guard which had conducted Rugiero hither halted, and deposited their arms; and this faithful servant was ordered to follow the commander of the party, who led him into a dark and intricate passage, while the person who had preferred the accusation against him kept warily behind him. They passed through many

K 4. strong

strong doors, of which the commander possessed the keys. At length they descended by the winding staircase of a turret, and passing a long and narrow arched vault, lighted by two dim lamps, began to ascend in the same manner. After ascending for some time, the guide halted, and, opening a door, introduced Rugiero to a small strong square room, which seemed to admit the light in the day by one small casement, opened in a wall of immense thickness. In short, it seemed a place of confinement for prisoners of a better order, who were not destined to be very rigidly dealt with.

In

In this room, at a table, on which burned two tapers, sat a young man, plainly drest, who seemed, as it appeared to Rugiero upon entering, in the act of painting his face by a looking-glass which stood on the table; while another person, of about his own stature, stood at his elbow, assisting him in the employment.

Such an employment, in such a situation, could not fail to strike Rugiero. The young man arose suddenly upon their entrance, and, taking his cloak and hat from his attendant, seemed to await their orders.

Rugiero

Rugiero had now an opportunity of viewing him. He seemed very young, of an elegant form, and brown complexion, his hair very much overshadowed his face, and, as well as his eyebrows, was remarkably dark.

Rugiero's guide accosted him respectfully, and, taking off his hat, told him that the *time was come*. The young man's servant upon this took up a small cloak bag, which was delivered to Rugiero, and attended his master, who followed the conductor to the guard room. The escort who had conducted Rugiero to this place, resumed their
arms,

arms, and proceeded towards the gate of the city, at which Rugiero had entered, but halted within about forty paces of it, when the commander, apologizing for the necessity he was under, ordered the young man and his servant to be bound together. The same ceremony was performed on Rugiero and his accuser, who were, to his surprise, bound arm to arm.

When they arrived at the gate, the commander asked for the serjeant of the guard, and told him he was conducting some prisoners to a castle, which he named, at no great distance.

He

He then gave him the word of the night. The gate was opened, the drawbridge let down, and the detachment soon saw themselves clear of the city.

CHAP.

CHAP. VH.

THE leaders of this little party no sooner found themselves out of sight of the gates, than they unbound the four prisoners, and striking out of the road, pursued their march through
a hollow

a hollow way, which in a few hours led them to the skirts of a forest.

During this march, Rugiero found himself treated with much respect by the person who commanded the detachment, and the man to whom he had delivered the thousand crowns.— The latter apologized to him for the manner in which he had been treated; but told him, that when he found him unfortunately in the custody of the other escort, he perceived there was no other mode of extricating him, than that of preferring the accusation, upon which he had been delivered up.

Upon

Upon the arrival of the detachment at the skirts of this forest, they were met by a party of horse, at the head of which Rugiero saw the Count Anselmo. This nobleman rode immediately up to the detachment, and dismounting from his horse, addressed himself most respectfully to the young man who had accompanied them from the prison, and insisted upon his riding during the rest of the journey. This offer the young man, who seemed much exhausted with fatigue, accepted, with many thanks, and was helped by the Count into the saddle. His servant was likewise accommodated with the charger of one
of

of the troopers, and the party pursued their march 'till they arrived, by a very narrow path, which would just admit a single horse, at the spot from which Rugiero had been detached on the preceding day.

On their arrival, the Count conducted the young man and his attendant into the cave, and ordered Rugiero to follow.

On his entrance to the cave, he was surprized to see the lady, whom he had left with the Count, rise from her seat, and embrace the young man with ardour—

dour—but his surprise was quickly alleviated by the Count, who said to him, “Rugiero, I may now congratulate you on your Lord’s approaching happiness. This,” added he, taking the young man by the hand, “is the Princess Isabel.”

Rugiero dropped on one knee, and the lady stretching out her hand to raise him, he pressed it respectfully to his lips.

“Where,” said she to Rugiero, “is your Lord? How came he ab-

sent at a time like this? Is he safe? Is he well?"

"He is safe, Madam," said Rugiero; "and a few hours will conduct me to him."

"Why is he not here?" said she.

Anselmo, to whom Rugiero had disclosed the cause of Rhinaldo's absence, then told her that an accident had prevented the Count's attendance, but that she should see him on the next day.

"My

“ My dear Cousin Ellenor,” said the Princess, turning to her, and embracing her with much affection, “ I did not think I should ever see you again. Blessed be heaven for this interview !”

“ To what propitious fortune,” said the other lady, returning her embrace with equal ardour, “ am I indebted for this happiness ?”

“ I scarcely,” said the Princess, “ know myself. You remember, my dear Cousin, that, on the day preceding that evening, when it was agreed that I

should attempt my escape from the detested addresses of the son of the Count St. Amand, I was closely confined to my chamber. The cause of that confinement was the rumour of a plot to restore my father to his throne. Of my escape I know little. I was alarmed by the cry of fire. I heard a confused noise at my door, which was suddenly opened. I was conveyed, with my faithful Barbara, to a room in the old palace, whither, late last night, the disguises in which we now appear were conveyed to us. Ah! Count Anselmo," continued the Princess, "Tell me,

me, I intreat you, my father! is he safe?"

"He is, Madam," said Anselmo; "it was not thought proper, 'till this effort was made, to draw him from his retirement. The project of making ourselves masters of the person of your uncle, and thus securing the capital, was entrusted but to few. Rhinaldo was among them. You will, I know, pardon him, that he did not confide to you the whole of our project. Such a confidence he knew, from the delicacy of your situation, could alone be attended with pain, anxiety, and even,

tually, perhaps, with danger to your person. As Rhinaldo could not appear in the capital with safety, it was resolved that he should not join us 'till our project was ripe for execution, and that then he should enter the town privately, and meet one of our party at a place appointed. If any thing had happened to disconcert our measures, at a word given by the person appointed to meet him, Rhinaldo was to take horse and fly to bring up some troops, who are collected on the frontiers; if nothing had happened, he was to join us. Rugiero attended us in his place, and, receiving the word intended for his lord,

lord, was conducted to us, for we did not then suspect, what we afterwards proved, that our plot had been discovered. As to your own escape, it was effected by a serjeant of Astolpho's guard, who had formerly served your father, and was attached to us. He had been informed of your confinement, and projected, with an officer of our party, the plan for your escape, which was speedily communicated to me. In the midst of the confusion, which occurred in the palace, he contrived to set fire to the chamber adjoining to yours, and prevailing on the guard, which was set over you, to open

L 4

your

your doors, he entered with his own men, and, under pretence of conveying you to your uncle, lodged you in the old palace. But if you wish to learn the story from his own mouth, here he is."

At that instant the commander of the party, which had escorted Isabel to this retirement, entered.

Isabel arose. "At least," said she, "I ought to express my obligations to him." She now began to thank the serjeant for his conduct—when he interrupted her suddenly.

"Lady,

“Lady,” said he, “this is no time for compliments. Heaven grant that you may yet be in safety.”

“My Lord,” said he to the Count, “your scouts bring us but scurvy intelligence. Several foldiers have been discovered making through the thickest of the wood in different parts, and there is reason to think we are discovered.”

Alarmed at this intelligence, Anselmo arose, and walked hastily towards the mouth of the cave. He had scarcely reached it, when a horseman, who
had

had been out to reconnoitre, brushed suddenly thro' the winding path in the wood, by which Anselmo had conducted Isabel to the cave, and riding hastily up to the Count, told him, that from an eminence he had discerned a large party, consisting both of infantry and cavalry, marching towards the skirts of the forest, and that a detachment of light troops were already upon the scout in the wood.

There was not now much time for debate. It was suddenly resolved that Anselmo, with a chosen party, mounted on the best horses they had, and carrying

carrying with them the little stock of provisions which they had already been enabled to procure, consisting chiefly of the flesh of some wild goats, should immediately retire thro' the forest, in order either to gain some station where their friends were assembled, or to fall in with the troops, which they hoped were already on their march from the frontiers; while Rugiero and the sergeant should form a kind of rear guard with the foot to cover their retreat, and check the enemy's horse, who could alone hope to overtake them.

This

This check they had no doubt they could effectually give, favoured as they were by the inaccessible nature of the ground, and their resolve was no sooner formed than executed. Isabel, her Cousin, and servant, were mounted, and, escorted by Count Anselmo and a chosen party of horse, filed through the narrow path; Rugiero and the sergeant, with a party of foot, having first reconnoitered it, and secured the outlet, which opened into a hollow way leading to the deepest recesses of the forest.

Our

Our fugitives had not long gained this road, when Rugiero perceived a small detachment of horse advancing from the opposite part of the road which led towards the city. Upon their approach, he threw his party into the woods on each side of the road, who made such use of their fire arms and arrows, that the horsemen finding them effectually secured from their attacks by the thickness of the wood, soon judged it prudent to retreat, and give up any farther pursuit 'till their infantry should arrive. During this time, Rugiero and his party gradually retreated after the Count, and had soon
the

the satisfaction to find themselves wholly unmolested by their enemies.

They pushed forward with as much speed as they were able to make, 'till the shades of night, which fell heavily and deeply over the forest, in some measure arrested their progress. They were then compelled to proceed at a slower pace, for which they, however, felt somewhat consoled, by the reflection that their pursuers, if they were yet pursued, were equally impeded by the cause which obstructed them. The night now grew darker, and, amidst the gloom which was occasioned by the
thick

thick and lofty branches of the trees, they found it extremely difficult to discern the path before them, in which they were alone guided by the deep and rugged banks which arose on each side.

The wind now arose, and whistled hollow through the trees—the gloom seemed redoubled—the rain began to rattle amidst the trees—and the thunder to roll at a distance—while the howling of the wolves on every side of them filled the little party with dismay.

They knew the ferocity of these animals, with multitudes of which this forest abounded; and the darkness of the night rendered them liable to unforeseen attacks from every side.

While they were in this situation, keeping as close together as possible, through the dread they entertained of these voracious animals, they perceived a distant light glimmering through a vista in the forest, and determined, after a short deliberation, to make towards it, and procure, if possible, some shelter 'till the storm should subside.

It

It is true, that, by such a step, they subjected themselves to a discovery, or rendered their march liable to be traced, if the house from which the light proceeded should prove the mansion of some person inimical to their cause; but the fatigue and terrors of the female companions of his flight, and indeed their seeming inability to proceed farther, induced Anselmo to run all hazards, and turning towards the place whence the light they had discerned diffused its beams, they found themselves in a short time close to the walls of a spacious and stately castle.

It was here resolved that, as their numbers might create suspicion, Rugiero, who was not so well known as the Count, and consequently was not so liable to detection, should, with the Lady Isabel, her Cousin, and attendants, demand admittance, and shelter from the storm, while the remainder of the party waited without, and sought protection from the boisterous inclemency of the night, in some of the out-houses of the Castle.

This they might easily do without detection, for though this Castle was
large

large and stately, it was a place of no great strength. The situation did not admit of its being moated, and its outward defence was a wall of no considerable height.

Rugiero then, with Isabel and her fair companions, while the rest of the party stood aloof, shrouded by the darkness of the night, applied for admittance. He had slung round him a bugle horn, which Anselmo had given him, with orders, in case he found himself in danger, to sound an alarm. The apparel of Isabel and her companion was plain and neat, and Ellenor

was covered with her veil. After some time the gate was opened, and Rugiero begged for shelter 'till the storm should pass over.

He said that his party had been attacked by the wolves, in passing the forest, and that they had been compelled, in order to save their own lives, to leave their horses a prey to those ravenous animals. After relating this story, they were, upon a short deliberation, admitted through the court into a lofty and spacious hall, hung round with armour.

The

The whole of the family seemed to have retired to rest, except a few servants, who were standing round a fire, to which Rugiero and his party advanced, in order to dry their cloaths. After some little time, the servants were summoned to attend their lord, who was preparing to retire for the night.

Rugiero and the Princess had waited but a few minutes, before they perceived the door of a room open, and two of the servants, who had just left them, descend by a few steps into the hall, bearing each a taper in his hand.

They were followed by a gentleman dressed in deep mourning, who advancing towards Rugiero and his companions, surveyed them with scrutinizing eyes; but what were the feelings of Isabel, when in this person she discovered the man with whose abhorred addresses she had been so much persecuted—the Count Rhodolpho, the son of the Count St. Amand.

Rhodolpho, after he had asked some questions of Rugiero, advanced towards her. She was sinking with terror—he looked at her, but, to all appearance, did not recollect her, for he passed

passed on to her Cousin Isabel, whom he desired to lift her veil. What were the sensations of Isabel at this request! She knew that Rhodolpho was perfectly acquainted with her Cousin.—Ellenor, who likewise knew him, hesitated and trembled. He intimated his desire with the tone of a man who would be obeyed.

Isabel, instinctively, caught hold of the horn which hung by Rugiero's side, and raised it to her mouth; but before her lips could reach it, overcome by her sensations, she fainted and fell senseless on the floor.

This circumstance called off the attention of Rhodolpho, who no longer persisted in his demand, but leaving Isabel, whose accident he imputed to fatigue, to the care of his servants, retired.

He had scarcely turned his back, when Ellenor, forgetting all precaution at beholding her Cousin's situation, threw off her veil, and flew to the lady Isabel's assistance.

Of the servants who had attended Rhodolpho into the hall, two had remained behind. — One of them was a
shrewd

shrewd fellow, whose subtilty and address had recommended him much to the favour of his lord.

The appearance of Isabel and her companion had struck him, as bearing in it something peculiar. The circumstance of her seizing the bugle, which hung at Rùgiero's side, and attempting to sound it, had not passed unnoticed; and the beauty of Ellenor so ill according with the situation in which she appeared, convinced him that some mystery attended the arrival of these people at the Castle.

Impressed

Impressed with this idea, while Rugiero, assisted by Ellenor, Barbara, and the other servant, was occupied in the recovery of Isabel, he stole away to his lord, and communicated to him all he had observed.

Rhodolpho, aroused by this intelligence, quitted his apartment, and returned to the hall, where he unluckily arrived, unseen by any one, before Ellenor had replaced her veil.

“ Lady Ellenor!” exclaimed Rhodolpho, starting back. He looked alternately at her and Isabel, who was
still

still sitting in the chair. The efforts used to recover her had disordered her dress—some false hair which she wore was displaced—the water sprinkled in her face had removed some of the paint which she had used to give a brown and manly hue to her complexion.

Rhodolpho looked stedfastly at her. He clasped his hands together, and raising them in a transport, exclaimed, “by all that’s sacred, this was above my hopes! The Princess Isabel! At last, Madam, you are mine—nor is it in the power of heaven or earth to redeem you.”

The

The arrival of all she had dreaded roused those spirits in the Princess which her fears had dissipated. She arose, and waving her hand, said to Rhodolpho, with an air of dignity,—“ My Lord, I will remain no longer here—let me pass.”

“ See that no one escapes,” said Rhodolpho to his servants. “ Ladies,” continued he, with a sneer,—“ you must be content with my inhospitable roof to-night.”

“ Not so, my Lord,” said Rugiero, firmly. “ Since this is the case, we must

must trust again to the inclement elements;" and taking Ifabel in one hand, and Ellenor in the other, he conducted them towards the door.

"On your lives, let no one pass," said Rhodolpho to his servants, who advanced towards the door.

Rugiero now quitting the hands of the ladies, drew his sword, and said, in a determined tone, "The man who attempts to obstruct our passage, dies."

Ifabel,

Isabel, Barbara, and Ellenor, now ran towards the door, while Rugiero, still facing Rhodolpho and his servants, kept them at bay.

“ Ring the alarm bell,” cried Rhodolpho; and the servants flew different ways to arouse the sleepy inhabitants of the Castle.

Rugiero, finding himself freed from the unequal attacks of his foes, took advantage of this breathing time, and, applying his bugle horn to his mouth, sounded a charge, while the delicate
and

and trembling hands of his companions were applied, with unskilful haste, to the massy bolts and bars of the door.

The active alarms of the servants soon brought assistance to their lord.

Rugiero found his assailants increase. He had repeatedly sounded his horn, when, to his extreme joy, he heard his friends on the outside of the door, which Isabel and her companions had at length contrived to unbar.

Count

Count Anselmo, and his party, now rushed in, and giving a sudden check to the assailants of Rugiero, bore away the Princess, her Cousin, and companion. By this time, however, the hall was full of men, for Rhodolpho had quartered his company of men at arms (which his father's interest had obtained for him) at his Castle that night, with intent to join the king on the next day. They rushed out in pursuit of the fugitives, and as they exceeded Anselmo's little band considerably in numbers, the latter were compelled to seek refuge in the darkness of the night, and

and the thickness and obscurity of the tangled forest. Pressed by a formidable enemy, close at their heels, they knew not which course to take, but dispersed in different bodies, and fought their safety in flight.

Anselmo, who would not quit his mistress and her lovely Cousin, found himself in a few minutes unaccompanied by any man of his party, except Rugiero. He sought the place where he had left his horses, and, with the assistance of Rugiero, having mounted his little female band as well as he could,

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they

they took the first path which led from the Castle, and pressing forward with all the speed they could make, soon found themselves free from the noise of their pursuers.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

ANSELMO and his fair companions had travelled for some time, Rugiero purposely keeping behind, that, if any pursuit should be made after them, he might give early intelli-

N 2

gence

gence of it,—when the horse on which this brave and faithful servant was mounted fell suddenly with him.

Rugiero readily extricated himself from him, but notwithstanding every effort he could make, in vain attempted to raise this worn-out animal, whose strength was wholly exhausted. After endeavouring, without success, to make the Count, who was at some distance before him, acquainted with his disaster, for the roaring of the storm completely drowned his exclamations, he resolved to sit under a tree, close to the spot

spot where his horse lay, and wait the approach of day with patience.

In the mean time, Count Anselmo, with the lady Ellenor, the Princess Isabel, and her companion, proceeded onward, unconscious of the fate of Rugiero. At last, however, hearing no longer the sound of his horse's feet, they stopped to listen—but they listened in vain. The howling of the wind was the only noise which saluted their ears. They knew not what to conjecture. Every idea they could form of the fate of Rugiero seemed pregnant with danger to themselves. They were at

length, after a long period passed in painful and fruitless expectation, compelled to pursue their journey without him, which they did in a cheerless and melancholy silence, each of them brooding over ideas which they were almost afraid to communicate to the others.

They were journeying in this manner, when they came to a more open part of the forest, a large and dark object before them, which they were soon convinced was, as indeed it proved, a house. Somewhat revived at this prospect, they pushed forward, and

speedily arrived at an old and ruined mansion.

In this ancient and dismantled dwelling, they perceived no signs of inhabitants. They judged it on that account a more proper shelter for the night; and though the Princess and her female companions were not unimpressed by terrors from the awfulness of the scene, they passed a crazy draw-bridge, and, crossing a courtyard, reached the door of the house, which Anselmo, dismounting, presently opened.

When he had opened it, he listened, but could hear nothing. He was the more convinced, by this circumstance, that the house was uninhabited, and prevailed, after much intreaty, on his timid companions to leave their horses, (which he fastened together) and enter the mansion with him.

The lightning, which had not as yet ceased to play around them, shooting through a large gothic window, displayed to them an old unfurnished hall. They found that the rain beat in near the spot where they stood, and the wind swept through the various avenues of
this

this uncomfortable asylum. As they were much incommoded in this situation, Anselmo proposed that they should seek a better shelter; and after some opposition, his friends clinging close around him, proceeded across the hall, and descending by a few steps, found himself in a warmer station. He now began to trace his new apartment by the walls, and soon perceived, by the style of the furniture, and the extent of the fire-place, that he had reached the kitchen of this mansion.

In pursuing his discovery, he soon found out that this part of the mansion
could

could not have been long uninhabited, and began to entertain hopes, if he could, by accident, procure any implement with which he might strike a light, of rendering their asylum less comfortable for the remainder of the time which they should be compelled pass in it.

His search was not unsuccessful, and it became apparent, to demonstration, that the house could not have been long forsaken. He found the implements he sought, and discovering some straw and faggots in a recess at no great distance from the fire-place, he kindled a
fire,

fire, and easily prevailed on his shivering friends to draw round it.

It was, in their situation, a luxury indeed. They wanted, it is true, to add to their comfort, the provisions which they had brought from their retreat in the forest, but in the late attack, which dispersed their party, they were separated from the horses which had been laden with them. They huddled round the fire, and dried their cloaths. They discoursed with somewhat more cheerfulness than their conversation had of late displayed, and congratulated each other on their escape

cape from the hands of Rhodolpho; 'till, exhausted with fatigue, sleep overtook them, and they sat slumbering over the dying embers, 'till they were roused by a noise which harrowed up the hearts of the females with terror, and appalled even the firm and manly breast of Anselmo.

A slow and solemn step, attended by the clashing of chains, seemed to gain upon their ears from a long passage opposite to that by which they had entered the kitchen.

Anselmo,

Anselmo (for the lady Isabel and her companions, breathless and overcome with terror, shrunk behind their protector, and did not dare to cast their eyes towards the place whence the noise which alarmed them proceeded) beheld a light gleam at a distance on the walls of the passage, and soon after discerned the form of a man advancing slowly along it.

A deadly paleness overspread the countenance—the eyes were hollow, and sunk—the hair was clotted with blood—with which his garments were also stained, and the light which Anselmo

felmo had descried, proceeded from a taper which he held in his hand.

Anselmo's blood froze in his veins at this spectacle. In spite of all his fortitude his knees trembled, and a cold sweat bedewed his brow; nor could he arouse in his mind resolution enough to address the spectre before him, 'till he was awakened from this trance of terror by a singular phenomenon.

The form which has been described continued to advance, 'till it approached so near to Anselmo, that the light of the taper gleamed upon him; upon
which

which he started suddenly, and prepared hastily to retreat.

Anselmo, roused by this circumstance, advanced to follow it; but the Princess Isabel and her Cousin shrieked aloud, and clung to him under the impulse of the most agonizing terror.

At their shrieks the phantom again turned towards them.

"Whatever thou art," cried Anselmo, "I conjure thee stay and relieve me from this horror."

"Anselmo!"

"Anselmo!" exclaimed the spectre, in a hollow voice, but in a tone of perplexity and wonder.

The voice, hollow as it was, sounded like that of Rhinaldo. It recalled the wandering senses of Isabel. She looked in the face of the speaker, pale and disfigured as it was—it was the countenance of Rhinaldo too.

Isabel shrieked and fainted.

"Help, help my Cousin Isabel!" exclaimed Ellenor.

Rhinaldo,

Rhinaldo, (for he was the spectre,) rushed forward to her assistance, while Anselmo remained motionless with wonder.

It was long before the beauteous Isabel could recover her scattered senses, and longer before she could be persuaded that her Rhinaldo stood before her, impressed as she was with the idea that it was the spirit of her departed lover which she had seen.

Her doubts, however, at length subsided, and pity, at the ghastly appearance of Rhinaldo, took place. She

asked him, with a mixture of affection, compassion, and horror, the cause of his present appearance; and Rhinaldo, postponing the gratification of his own curiosity, acquainted her with his arrival at the forlorn mansion in which she saw him—the death of the Count de St. Amand—and the discovery of Count Tancred; after which he proceeded as follows:

“ Rugiero had not long left us when
“ we discovered that the escape of that
“ servant whom he had, without suc-
“ cess, attempted to detain, was as fa-
“ tal a circumstance as his affectionate
“ fears

“ fears forboded that it would be:—
“ This fellow went immediately to a
“ Castle of his lord's, which is at no
“ great distance from this, and alarm-
“ ed the family with the story of his
“ death. Before we could settle any
“ plan of escape, for which my wound,
“ though it was but slight, in some
“ degree still disqualified me, the
“ house was assailed by the domestics
“ of the Count. We barricaded it as
“ well as we could, and prevailed on
“ the servants who remained with us
“ to assist us in our attempt to carry
“ off the lady. We were preparing
“ to depart, when a postern door was
“ forced,

" forced, and our enemies rushed in
 " upon us. Count Tancred and I
 " drew our swords, in defence of the
 " lady. I know no more—I was cut
 " down—nor did I recover my senses,
 " 'till I found myself loaded with the
 " chains I now wear, and surrounded
 " by a party of ruffians, whom I had
 " never before beheld. I was con-
 " ducted into the presence of Rho-
 " dolpho, who stood in the midst of
 " a circle of armed men. When he
 " perceived who his prisoner was, the
 " hatred he had always borne towards
 " me broke out in the bitterest invect-
 " tives, and he ordered me to be con-
 " veyed

“veyed to the dungeon from which I
 “had rescued the Count Tancred.—
 “There my conductors left me. I
 “heard the last door of my prison
 “close—in vain did I wait to hear it
 “open again—hour after hour passed
 “away—and the horrid silence of the
 “dungeon continued uninterrupted.
 “My remorseless foes had doomed me
 “to all the horrors of a death by fa-
 “mine. I soon experienced many of
 “its pangs. I awaked from my swoon
 “to an intolerable thirst. Chained as
 “I was, they had not taken the pre-
 “caution to fix me to a particular spot,
 “presuming, as I suppose, that I was

“ well enough secured. I roved round
“ my dungeon, raging under the ago-
“ ny of the thirst which consumed me,
“ when I felt my foot touch some-
“ thing. Judge what was my trans-
“ port, when I perceived this to be
“ part of an earthen pitcher of water,
“ which had been left there when
“ Count Tancred was removed. But
“ I will not dwell on circumstances
“ which must afflict you. My wounds,
“ though they had bled much, did not
“ prove of much consequence. The
“ horrors of my situation gave me
“ strength and courage. I surveyed
“ my dungeon, and by a feeble ray of
“ light

“ light which entered at a narrow slip
 “ towards the roof, I descried a part
 “ of the wall bricked in the form of
 “ an arch. It immediately occurred
 “ to me that this had formerly been a
 “ door way, and that it might not be
 “ of the same substance as the rest of
 “ the wall. I sought again round my
 “ cavern for something with which I
 “ might remove a brick, and at least
 “ attempt to discover its thickness.—
 “ In searching near the stone to which
 “ my friend Tancred had been fasten-
 “ ed, I most providentially discovered
 “ a dagger which I had used in at-
 “ tempting to free him from his chains,

“ and had afterwards thrown carelessly
“ by. With this I went to work.—
“ The first brick I found much diffi-
“ culty in removing—when that was
“ done, my labour grew lighter in pro-
“ portion; but many weary hours
“ passed, before I had made an aper-
“ ture big enough to admit my body.
“ This, however, I at length accom-
“ plished, and found myself in a dun-
“ geon more horrid than that which I
“ had quitted. It was lower than the
“ other, and nothing more dismal,
“ damp, and fætid, can be imagined.
“ A few worn steps, just under the
“ breach I had made, convinced me
“ that

“ that that part of the wall had, as I
“ had conjectured, been formerly a
“ door-way—but I was soon too
“ dreadfully convinced of it, by an
“ object which, when I adverted to
“ my own situation, curdled my blood
“ with horror. By the faint light
“ which gleamed through the aperture
“ I had made, I discovered a rusty
“ iron collar, chained to the wall—a
“ hoop of iron, large enough to en-
“ close the waist of a man, hung be-
“ low it, close to the ground—and be-
“ neath it, amid a few rusted chains,
“ and the tattered remnants of cloth
“ which had escaped putrefaction, lay
“ in

“ in a heap the skeleton of the wretch
“ who had thus shrunk from his fet-
“ ters. The horror with which I was
“ struck at this spectacle, did not,
“ however, prevent my exploring my
“ new place of confinement. I could
“ find no door. Alas ! upon this un-
“ happy victim, the only door to the
“ dungeon had, probably, been walled
“ up, as it was thought, for ever ! In
“ passing round this dungeon, I per-
“ ceived the wind blow upon me from
“ one corner, and, feeling the place,
“ found that the walls were parted,
“ either rifted by the bolt of heaven,
“ or severed by the slow but sure hand
“ of

“ of time. At this spot, then, I re-
“ newed my labour. I will not trou-
“ ble you with a detail of it. After
“ infinite toil, for, though more de-
“ cayed, the wall at this place was
“ much thicker than the former, I
“ found my way, not many hours ago,
“ into a narrow winding passage, thro’
“ which I ascended into the house.—
“ I proceeded, you may imagine, with
“ extreme caution; nor did I discover
“ all the horrors of my former situa-
“ tion, ’till I found that the whole of
“ the premises were deserted, and I
“ was left to undergo the fate of the
“ miserable victim, whose remains I
“ had

“ had so lately beheld. I just now
“ discovered the remains of some salt-
“ ed provisions, of which I have had
“ the prudence to eat but sparingly,
“ and which, perhaps, may not be un-
“ welcome to you. What is become
“ of my friend Count Tancred and the
“ lady, I cannot conjecture. She is,
“ I suppose, carried off; and when I
“ reflect on my own situation, I can
“ scarcely entertain a hope that he is
“ yet alive.”

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

WHEN Rhinaldo had finished his story, Anselmo related to him the distresses which had driven them to take shelter in a place which seemed so little calculated to produce
so

so fortunate a meeting. Rhinaldo brought forth the little store of provisions which he had discovered. The fire was refreshed. Rhinaldo and Isabel blest that providence which had thus, when least expected, permitted them once more to behold each other, and to pour forth the delicate and chaste effusions of the sublimest of all passions, unchecked by harsh controul of pride, or the baneful mandates of a rigorous and unfeeling state policy.

Anselmo and his Ellenor were too much occupied with each other to interrupt them, nor would they, in spite
of

of the remonstrances of Barbara, who had alone the discretion to reflect that their present situation was not wholly free from danger, have suffered a thought to intrude on the bliss of the moment, had not the step of some persons in the hall roused them from this state of oblivious happiness.

Anselmo, starting up, drew his sword, and Rhinaldo, whom his own exertions and those of his friend, tho' they could wholly liberate, had freed from so much of chains, that they were no longer an incumbrance, seized the
first

first weapon he could meet with, and they both moved towards the passage which led to the hall.

They perceived two men advancing towards them, one of whom bore a torch in his hand.

"Let us search," said he, who bore the torch, "through every corner of this seat of horrors. If he is alive I will find him."

Rhinaldo knew the voice of Tancred. "Count Tancred! and living!"

ing!" cried Rhinaldo; "thro' what miracle is it that I am again permitted to embrace my friend?"

"Rhinaldo!" exclaimed Tancred. "Then the object of my search is attained—blessed be heaven for the safety of my deliverer!"

"But how could you escape," resumed Rhinaldo, "the danger in which we were both involved?"

"Alas!" said Tancred, "I am indebted for my unhappy life to the

loveliest—the best of women!—but no more of that—the thought is too much—Oh! let me but live to return the boon she gave!—to die for her!—but I rave——To make short of my story—“When I last saw you, we were occupied in the defence of the Countess. While we were engaged with a party, too numerous for any but desperate men to contend with, another band seized the Countess, and bore her away. I left your side, my friend, and rushed to her assistance. I was struck down by a partizan—another arm was lifted for my destruction—the Countess, caught

caught hold of it—she put her purse into the hand of the soldier, and begged he would make his mistress his debtor, by saving my life. She promised the highest rewards. Interest, or, as I have reason to believe from his late conduct, humanity, determined this brave fellow. On the instant he bestrode me, fallen as I was, his comrades were quickly occupied in conveying away the Countess; and when he found himself free from observation, he raised me from the ground, and carried me to a private part of the Castle, whither, after the departure of Rhodolpho, he returned with his father, a

P 2 woodman,

woodman, of this forest, and conveyed me to his cottage. I had there so little recovered the effect of the blow I had received, that I scarcely knew what they did; but was soon re-established by the care that was taken of me. Behold my deliverer—he has resolved to share my fortune ——”

As Count Tancred was proceeding, Rhinaldo was alarmed by the trampling of horses. They paused and listened—the noise increased—the voices of men were distinctly heard.

“ We

"We are surrounded," cried Anselmo. "Rhodolpho's party have traced us."

"There is then but one step to take," said Rhinaldo. "Follow me."

Isabel and her companions seemed now inured to terror. They suffered themselves to be led in silence. Rhinaldo conducted them up a back staircase, towards the room in which the Countess had been confined. They arrived at the little lumber room, which contained the battered armour. From this place Rhinaldo took the precau-

tion to arm himself. He took down some of the swords, but they were wholly unserviceable. At last he chose a strong and heavy pole-axe, and shoving back the pannel, discovered to his friends the iron door. This door he opened, and bidding the forlorn party, which he conducted, enter the apartment, he replaced the pannel as carefully as possible, and joined his friends below.

They were convinced that the noise they had heard proceeded from some persons who had pursued them from the Castle of Rhodolpho, and who, probably,

bably, suspecting that if they should by chance have taken that road, they would retire to the old mansion for shelter, or, perhaps, attracted by the light of the fire they had kindled, or of the taper which Rhinaldo had procured, were induced to search for them there.

They formed many conjectures as to the number of their enemies; at the supposed magnitude of which they were not so much alarmed, as at the idea that Rhodolpho might be among them, who had, most probably, been acquainted by his father with the secret

of the pannel—a secret, as yet, perhaps, undivulged to any other person.

Their fears, however, as to the presence of Rhodolpho, proved on this occasion unfounded. He was on the succeeding day to join Astolpho with his company of men at arms, and had only detached on this pursuit a pretty numerous train of domestics, well armed, and headed by two of his most trusty adherents.

While they stood wrapt in these conjectures, and in a mournful silence the result of them, they were aroused by the

the sound of many steps ascending the stairs, which led to the little lumber-room. They listened in a state of breathless expectation and terror.— They had not yet closed to the iron door; nor indeed could its strength avail them, as all the fastnings were on the outer side.

They heard a person walk slowly round the lumber room. What were their sensations when he exclaimed, “ We can go no farther this way—let us return.”

This

This was assented to by a companion who was with him, and they heard, with a rapture scarcely to be described, their returning footsteps on the staircase which they had just ascended.

Rhinaldo and his companions continued in their place of concealment for half an hour, before they judged it prudent to make any attempt towards discovering whether their pursuers had retired; for, in their secluded situation, they could hear nothing.

Rhinaldo

Rhinaldo then slowly began to open the pannel, when an object presented itself, which induced him to close it again with a haste which struck a sudden terror to the hearts of his companions.

This object was the face of a man. This person, who bore a light in his hand, was ascending the staircase when Rhinaldo perceived him, who encouraged a faint hope, that, from the distance he was at, the taper he bore could not cast any strong reflection on the walls of the room.

This

This hope, however, soon died away. They heard a clattering noise against the pannel itself, and immediately prepared themselves to receive this intruder in such a manner as to prevent, if possible, any discovery through his means.

In a short time afterwards the noise ceased, and they heard the footsteps of this person descending the staircase, as they immediately conjectured, to procure assistance. They now gave themselves up for lost, and an hour passed before Rhinaldo dared again attempt to open the pannel. He proceeded cautiously ;

tiously; but his effort was accompanied by a noise he could not account for; and a heavy object fell inwards against his legs. This he soon discovered to be a cuirass, which indeed the person who had caused them so much alarm had placed there.

This person had returned to this ancient armoury, to try if he could accommodate himself with some pieces of more value than his own—but probably retired disappointed in his aim.

Rhinaldo now recovered from this new alarm, and proceeded cautiously towards

towards the head of the great staircase. When he arrived there, he heard the murmur of voices at the door of the hall, and found that their pursuers, tired of their vain search, were about to mount their horses and retire. He waited 'till he heard them pass over the drawbridge, and then returning to his friends, acquainted them with this event.

Upon intelligence so welcome, they quitted their place of concealment, and after waiting 'till they judged that their pursuers had proceeded far enough to assure them from the danger of a discovery,

covery, they sallied from these crazy walls, and left this forlorn mansion for ever!

They had no sooner gained the forest, than Isabel, throwing her arms round her Cousin, and faithful attendant, mingled her tears with theirs; and Rhinaldo and Anselmo, pressing Isabel and Ellenor gently to their breasts, joined with them in pouring forth their thanks to heaven for their signal deliverance; while Count Tancred contemplated, in deep and silent sorrow, the mysterious fate which involved that adored

adored object, for whom alone he thought the life he had so lately retrieved worth preserving.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.



